
Proceedings of the General Committee of Section New York of the Socialist Labor Party of America, May 27, 1899.

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Meeting at 64 East 4th Street.

Comrades Keep and Brown presided.

Minutes of previous meeting adopted as read.

Committee on Credentials reports favorably on the following: *New York* — 12th AD, Julius Hammer; 16th AD, M. Geisler, M. Eckstein, and L. Roth, in place of Paul Joseph, L. Eckstein, and H. Eckstein; 26th AD, Br. 2, S. Klein and L.H. Weisberger; 30th AD, M. Hillquit. *Brooklyn* — 6th AD, Charles S. Van der Porten; 16th Ward, Br. 1, B. Katz and R. Stone; 23rd Ward, A. Hindes.

The report was concurred in and the delegates seated.

46 new members were admitted.

The debate on the report of the Executive Committee on the late proceedings in the *Volkszeitung* Publishing Association was then resumed. At 12 o'clock the previous question was called for. The motion to adopt the report and concur in the recommendations was carried by 47 votes against 20, and the meeting adjourned.

Following is the report:

To the General Committee, Section New York.

We present to you the following report in accordance with your instruction to the City Executive Committee to investigate the late proceedings of the Socialist Cooperative Publishing Association and present a report of its findings.

The EC summoned the following 8 witnesses, 4 from each side: DeLeon, Vogt, Fiebiger, Max Halder, Schlueter, Jonas, Stahl, and John Heinrich. All were

members of Section New York as well as the SCPA. Halder could not appear and was excused, and Heinrich denied the right of the EC to summon him and refused to appear.

Comrade DeLeon made the following statement: The constitution of the Publishing Association contains a clause providing that the publications of the Association must be in accord with the principles and tactics of the SLP. On Dec. 14, 1898, the *Volkszeitung* contained an editorial article criticizing the present trade union policy of the Party and deploring the fact that the old policy of boring from within "was given up." Another article followed in the same strain. The Board of Directors of the Association thereupon passed a vote of censure on the Editor. At the next meeting of the Association a motion was made to rescind the censure. The debate on this motion was protracted for 3 months. All of those who favored the motion, excepting Seubert and Ehrenpreis, hailed the articles as the beginning of an attack on the party's policy. Heinrich tried to ridicule the party outside of this city. Stahl said the General Committee was hopeless and corrupted. Hergert said that the *Volkszeitung* would die without the support of the conservative unions. Jonas, following Hergert, said that a rupture between the paper and the party would not injure the paper. Some of those who favored the motion maintained that the two articles in question were not in the nature of an attack, but merely the justifiable exercise of free criticism. To test the sincerity of their contention, Comrade Vogt brought forward a resolution declaring the adherence of the Association to the Party's policy. By a vote of 54 against 30, the resolution was not allowed to come to a vote. The motion to rescind the censure was carried. A vote of censure was also passed against Comrade Vogt for introducing in the General Committee a resolution condemning the *Volkszeitung*.

Editor Schlueter at no time repudiated the hostile utterances of his supporters against the party. He

claimed the right of criticizing concrete cases, yet he never made use of this right. On the contrary; he simply suppressed information and abstained from commenting editorially on matters of vital importance. This was notably the case with reference to the Alliance strikes in New Bedford, Mass., and Allegheny, Pa., and in the case of Haverhill. For details on these points as well as the taxation controversy, we call your attention to the appendix to the declaration of the NEC published in the May Day [1899] issue of *The People*.

Comrade Vogt made the following statement:

According to his impression the Association is composed of more than one-half of men who are not Party members. Most of these do not usually attend meetings, but form a sort of reserve army. Of the 21 votes cast against the expulsion of Modest, 17 came from Party members. The failure to obtain a sufficient majority to expel Modest broke down the safeguard provided by the constitution of the Association to the effect that no member of another political party can be a member of the Association. Koeln, a Party member, said in course of the above-mentioned debate that it was high time that the Association take possession of its property in *The People* and put an end to its submission to the NEC. Simon, a member of the 10th AD, said "we must emancipate ourselves from the Party." Editor Schlueter said that he repudiated the Alliance policy and that the Association is not virtually a committee of the Party. The "Volkszeitung Conference" is chiefly instrumental in backing up the stand of the paper against the Party. This "Conference" is composed mainly of organizations friendly to the Party in a perfunctory sort of way, but owing to their affiliation with the big national unions are hostile to the aggressive policy of the Party. This body demanded that Comrade Vogt withdraw the resolution adopted by the General Committee against the *Volkszeitung* (as if he had the GC in his pocket) otherwise he should be censured.

Comrade Fiebiger stated that Assistant Editor Grunzig is not a member of the Party and that he violently opposed a demand once made by Section New York that the employees of the *Volkszeitung* should join the Party. During the debate above mentioned he said that after the convention of 1896 he and Schlueter agreed not to attack the trade union resolution there adopted, though both were opposed to it. Schlueter said that no one should think he would attack the Party, but he maintained that the Association is not virtually a committee of the Party.

Comrades Schlueter, Jonas, and Stahl referred to the English monthly edition of the *Volkszeitung* as the general statement they would make. The following statements were made in answer to questions put to each one separately.

Comrade Schlueter: The *Volkszeitung* Publishing

Association is independent of the Party and coordinate with it. It can at any time change its constitution as well as its attitudes towards the Party. He is personally opposed to the Alliance, but as editor he stood loyally by it. After the last National convention [9th: July 4-10, 1896] the *Volkszeitung* had editorials in favor of the Alliance, and it has ever since loyally supported the Alliance. The *Volkszeitung* usually reprints articles which appear in the *Vorwaerts*, but he did not reprint one *Vorwaerts* article on the role of the Alliance in the Allegheny strike and struck out a part of another article on the same subject because he did not agree with the opinions there expressed. In his opinion it was not the Alliance, but the spirit of Socialism and the Socialist Labor Party that animated the men in Allegheny. He did not know whether the Alliance is motivated by the Socialist spirit. A national convention cannot decide that a particular organization is animated with the Socialist spirit, but everyone must decide for himself. He does not know why the national convention endorsed the Alliance, and does not think the convention declared the Alliance to be a Socialist organization. He admits that he never editorially mentioned the work of the Alliance in Allegheny, though he believed the information of the *Volkszeitung* correspondent to that effect. He maintains that he paid due tribute to the work of the Alliance in New Bedford (though in reprinting the article from the *Vorwaerts* he struck out the direct reference to the Alliance). Asked whether in making the declaration in the Association that no one should think he would attack the Party and its policy, he felt himself called upon to do so because of the animosity against the Party policy prevailing in the Association, he answered that he did not know. Nor does he know why certain statements made in the Central Federated Union at a recent meeting in reference to the May Day Conference have not been reported in the *Volkszeitung*. Nor does he know whether the repeated suppressions in the *Volkszeitung* would have the effect of causing its readers to think that it was opposed to the Alliance. He did not suppress information damaging to Haverhill, though he did not reprint the correspondences in *The People* and *Vorwaerts* for various reasons. He did not excuse their Armory record.

Comrade Jonas said: The Publishing Association is not formally bound by the decisions of the Party though it is so in spirit. He denies that he spoke of a rupture between the *Volkszeitung* and the Party, but said in effect that if the paper should be cut off from the Party by misrepresentation, the German workingmen would stick to it. The constitution of the Association formerly contained a provision for the expulsion of members who had joined other political parties, but this clause was stricken out in 1896 at the

suggestion of Comrade Fiebiger, as it was found that the law would not sustain this provision (the EC has ascertained that a provision to this effect is still in the constitution). Only a few non-members of the Party attend the meetings of the Association. The opposition to the Alliance arises from its being regarded a failure. A very large number of those who supported Editor Schlueter were opposed to the Party's trade union policy. Up to the present controversy, the *Volkszeitung*, in his opinion, supported the Alliance. He is astonished that so few articles favoring the Alliance appeared in both *Volkszeitung* and *Vorwaerts*. In his opinion, the Alliance weakened the Party in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Yet he thinks the next national convention would again endorse the Alliance.

Comrade Stahl said: The Publishing Association was formed by the Party and progressive trade unions. The Association is subordinate to the Party only in so far as its own constitution makes it so. He said in the Association that the General Committee was hopeless and demoralized because its members subordinate themselves to certain individuals in whom they repose implicit confidence and follow them blindly. Someone then suggested to him the word "corrupted," to which he assented. He did not mean to use the word, and used it only in the sense in which he used the words "hopeless" and "demoralized." He thinks that the majority of the Association are not opposed to the Alliance. He cannot explain the want of a sufficient majority to expel Modest, as he was not present at the meeting.

On these statements it is not necessary to go into extensive comments. The evidence submitted by Comrades DeLeon, Vogt, and Fiebiger has been laid before the Party members quite in detail in the article headed "Sign Posts" and in the Declaration of the NEC, both of which were published in *The People* [May 1, 1899], and are therefore well known to all of you by this time. But the Executive Committee feels it its plain duty to call your attention to the statements made by Comrades Schlueter, Jonas, and Stahl, but especially of Comrade Schlueter, both on account of the important post he occupies as Editor of the *Volkszeitung* and the novel and radical character of his assertions.

In the first place, we cannot by any means agree with Editor Schlueter that the *Volkszeitung* has properly supported the Party in its fight against the manifestation known as "Haverhillism." The acts of the Haverhill crowd in defiance of class consciousness were so glaring, their fraternizing with labor fakirs and capitalists was so notorious, that the *Volkszeitung* could easily have obtained the information if it made an honest attempt to do so. Its duty in this regard was all the more imperative in view of the wide publicity given to the Haverhill election, its proclamation as a

Socialist victory, and the warm welcome Mayor [John] Chase received at the hands of the worst corruptionists of the labor movement in this city.

Secondly, Editor Schlueter says that individually he is opposed to the Alliance, but that editorially he has loyally supported it. How the *Volkszeitung* has supported the Alliance is by this time pretty well known not only to the readers of the paper but to the comrades at large. The numerous facts given in the Appendix to the Declaration of the NEC cannot be argued away. The wide difference of opinion in this respect between Comrade Schlueter and the bulk of the Party members is entirely explainable by the anomalous and absurd position in which Comrade Schlueter is put. The Editor cannot be separated from the man, and the Editor cannot support with loyalty what the man with equal loyalty opposes. We can see how one may differ from the majority of the Party on a particular question and yet be a contributor, or even an Assistant Editor to a Party paper. But the Editor in Chief, who determines the tone of the paper and represents the party before the general public, cannot abstain from discussing all the burning questions of Party policy, and he cannot properly and consistently represent the Party if he is at variance with the Party. The wavering, the uncertainty, the ambiguity, the contradictoriness of the *Volkszeitung*, ending in open defiance, are entirely due to this fact.

Thirdly, Editor Schlueter maintains that it was the spirit of Socialism and not the spirit of the ST&LA which animated the men in Allegheny; that he does not know whether the Alliance is animated with the Socialist spirit; that the [1896] national convention did not declare the Alliance to be a Socialist organization; and that in general, no national convention of the Party can decide that a particular organization is animated with the Socialist spirit, but everyone must judge for himself. These sentiments, coming as they do from a man occupying the post of Editor, must be strenuously and unequivocally repudiated. The Socialist spirit does not hover in the air, outside of the Socialist organization that manifests it. It is the Party by its decisions and actions that decides what constitutes the Socialist spirit and what organizations are animated by that spirit. And when the Party, in national convention assembled, hailed with joy the formation of the Alliance as a step toward the emancipation of labor, it then declared the Alliance to be a Socialist organization and animated by the Socialist spirit. We repudiate the attempt of Schlueter to oppose the spirit of Socialism, or of the Party, to the spirit of the Alliance as a wily demagogical attempt to cover up with an imaginary distinction the real conflict of opinion on one of the most important and vital points of the Party's policy between him and those who elected him, on the one hand, and the Party, on the other hand.

Lastly, Editor Schlueter maintains that the Publishing Association is independent of the Party and coordinate with it, and that the Association may at any time change its attitude towards the Party. This claim, if generally upheld, we regard as a direct menace to the integrity, aye, the very existence of the Party. The press is the most important agency of the Party and the party must control its press or the press will control the Party. An association that has control of the Party press thereby has control of the Party itself, unless the association recognizes itself as subject to the control of the Party. To maintain, as Editor Schlueter and other members of the Association do, that the Publishing Association is independent of the Party and coordinate with it, is tantamount to a declaration that the Association is superior to the Party and can dictate the policy of the Party through its control over the press of the Party. The statement of the Editor on the floor of the Association that he would support the Party in the future, and his assertion before the Executive Committee that he has loyally supported it in the past — an assertion utterly at variance with the facts in the case of the Alliance and receiving a very unusual confirmation in the controversy on taxation — these promises and assertions cannot do away with the force of his declaration that the Publishing Association is entirely independent of the Party, coordinate with it, and can at any time change its attitude towards it. A Party cannot depend on the

mere goodwill of an independent outside organization.

We cannot undo the past. The harm that has been done cannot be wiped out. But to avoid further mischief we recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

The General Committee, Section New York, calls upon the SCPA to declare unequivocally its subordination at all times to the Party, as we cannot regard the SCPA in any other light than as a committee of the Party for the performance of a Party function, though it is endowed with a legal existence owing the to the exigencies of the law of this state.

The editorial arrangement of the Volkszeitung is to be entirely in accord with the decisions of the Party, local, state, and national.

This report, together with the resolutions embodying our demands, are to be transmitted to the SCPA.

H. Simpson, Secretary.

[This report to the General Committee was suppressed by the *Volkszeitung* in its report of the session of the General Committee.]

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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